



Office of the City Manager

May 10, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: *DWR* Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Re: Mak Roote Artwork Restoration and Public Art Collection Care

In April 2024, the City of Berkeley's Public Art Program completed a major artwork restoration project in West Berkeley at the University Avenue underpass transit node, known as Berkeley Transit Plaza, which extends from 4th Street to the Berkeley Amtrak train platform. Commissioned by the City of Berkeley in 2005 and completed in 2007, "Mak Roote" is a collaborative public art installation created by muralist John Wehrle and poet Betsy Davids, which in recent years has suffered from vandalism, as well as fading and staining from overhead roadway runoff.



Before restoration



After restoration

The artwork installation encompasses the entire underpass area and is comprised of numerous painted elements:

- The east wall features a series of dancing Ohlone figures along with the Chochochenyo phrase “mak roote ‘inutka hui_i_tak” which translates to “follow our road to the future.”
- Painted on the overhead structural beams are lines from the poem that Betsy Davids wrote for this location.
- The west wall at the station platform features a trompe l’oeil mural depicting a mix of contemporary and historic figures off-boarding a train.
- Unifying the entire installation are the red painted overpass support columns and yellow painted beams.



To complete this restoration project, Civic Arts staff managed an artwork services contractor for cleaning, repainting and artwork conservation within an operational transit node, coordinating these efforts with multiple City departments including Public Works’ Operations and Traffic Maintenance divisions, and the City’s Neighborhood Services Division, in addition to coordination with external railroad partners, Amtrak and Capitol Corridor trains. With approximately 60,000 passengers utilizing the Berkeley Amtrak station annually, this project not only cleaned and restored one of the City’s largest artwork installations, but also revitalized a highly trafficked area with upgrades for those

who live and work in Berkeley, as well as for those who commute to and from Berkeley by train.

The completed public art restoration project included:

- Power washing and repainting of artwork in the underpass area
- Professional cleaning and repairing of all mural elements
- Professional repainting of poetry text



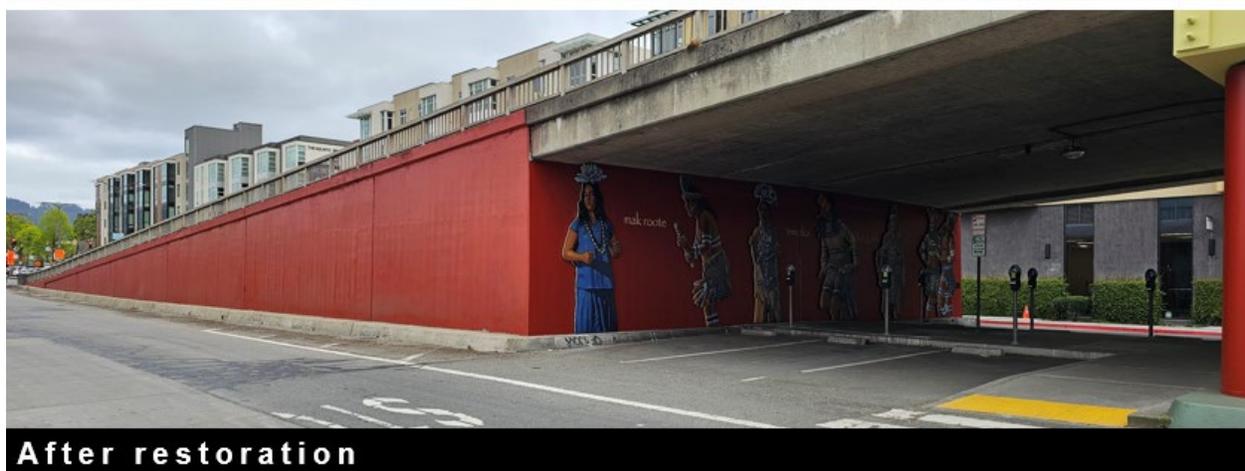
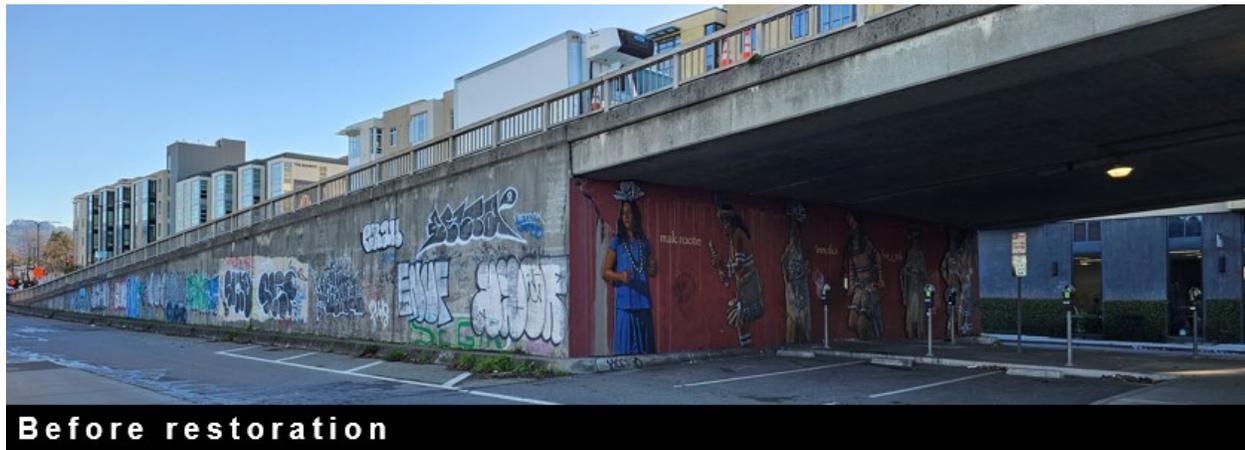
Before restoration



After restoration

Additional environmental improvements made as part of this project include:

- Graffiti abatement strategy for north and south ramp walls of University Avenue
- Replacement of vandalized parking signage and broken newspaper boxes
- Repainted street curbs and accessible parking throughout underpass area
- Power washed glass canopies at train and bus waiting areas
- Street sweeping and removal of debris and weeds throughout underpass area



The cost of cleaning and restoring this artwork installation was approximately \$145,000 funded through the Cultural Trust Fund (Fund 148). Project planning began in March 2023 and on-site restoration took place between March and April, 2024.

Civic Arts - Public Art Program & Collection Care

Throughout the City of Berkeley, public art enhances parks, urban spaces, and civic buildings, celebrating the unique character of our city and strengthening the community's sense of belonging with artworks reflective of Berkeley's cultural diversity. Since its inception in 1967, Berkeley's Civic Arts Program has acquired over 50 outdoor permanent public artworks through donations, purchases, and commissions, including painted murals, works of sculpture, mosaics, tile artworks, and architectural design elements. Also included in the City's public art collection are over 55 portable (mostly framed) artworks such as drawings, etchings, paintings, textiles, and prints currently displayed in city-owned buildings. The Civic Arts Program is charged with the maintenance and conservation of the City of Berkeley's Public Art Collection, as well as the acquisition of new artworks through the public art commissioning process.

In March 2020, the Civic Arts Program completed a comprehensive assessment of the Public Art Collection, which included a complete inventory and condition evaluation of all the artworks in the City's collection. The assessment found that all of the two-dimensional indoor artworks (57% of the collection) are in good-to-excellent condition with most damage limited to scratches and scuffs on the frames and glazing. However, roughly 28% of the City's entire collection (comprising indoor and outdoor artworks) require conservation attention. While the artworks in need of treatment represent only about a quarter of the works in the City's collection, they represent 65% of the City's outdoor artworks.

Additional Completed and In Process Conservation Projects

In addition to the 2024 restoration of "Mak Roote" by John Wehrle and Betsy Davids, the Civic Arts Program has completed the following five artwork conservation projects since 2019, and has two more in progress.

"Earthsong" by Wang Po Shu

Sculpture relocated due to Shattuck realignment. Work included repainting and installation in landscaped pedestrian median on Shattuck Avenue in 2019.



Before restoration



After restoration

“s-Hertogenbosch” by John Toki

Sculpture relocated due to Shattuck realignment. Work included cleaning, repairs and installation in new location in front of Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive on Center Street in 2020.



Before removal



After installation in new location



“Good Fortune” by Diana Rossi

Artwork was removed from former Center Street Garage location prior to garage demolition. Artwork repaired and reinstalled in new location at Live Oak Park in 2021.



Before relocation



After relocation

“In Berkeley” by Nancy Selvin

Artwork damaged by unstable paving. Tiles refabricated and installed at original location at the corner of Shattuck Avenue and Addison Street in 2022.



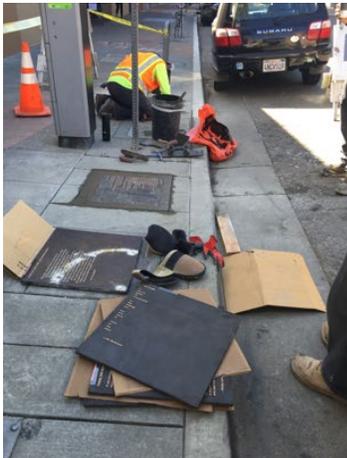
Before refabrication



After refabrication

“Addison Street Poetry Walk” designed by Robert Hass and John Roberts

Multiple construction projects between 2019 and 2023 on Addison Street between Milvia and Shattuck necessitated the removal and reinstallation of a number of poetry plaques over a period of five years.



During construction & reinstallation—partial representation

Two additional artwork conservation and restoration projects are also underway:

“Shoshone” by William Wareham

Artwork damaged by vandalism and areas of paint failure and corrosion. Sculpture was removed in 2024 from its Aquatic Park location to undergo restoration and will be reinstalled at a future date with an accessible pathway. Repainting is complete and installation will be scheduled after coordination with coming development in the area.



Before restoration



After restoration

“World Wall of Peace” by Carolyn Marks

Located in Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park, the artwork is comprised of three walls featuring hundreds of ceramic tiles created with the help of community volunteers. The artwork is in poor condition with graffiti, cracks and loss to individual tiles, heavy surface soiling, applied stickers, and more than 30 years of public interaction and outdoor display. Restoration is anticipated to be complete no later than December 2025.



Current conditions



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The Civic Arts Program plans to conserve the remaining artworks in most need of treatment as funding and staffing capacity allows. In addition to scheduled restoration and maintenance, artworks in the collection also occasionally require emergency repair.

For more information on the City of Berkeley's Public Art Collection, please visit the [Civic Arts Program's Public Art webpage](#) or contact Mark Salinas at (510) 981-7538 or msalinas@berkeleyca.gov.

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